



## **Domestic and Sexual Violence in Vermont: Current Landscape and Funding Issues**

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### **Victim Needs and Pandemic Recovery**

- The COVID-19 pandemic deeply impacted victims of domestic and sexual violence. Throughout the pandemic, shelters remained open and there was no interruption in 24/7 support for survivors across Vermont.
- Member Organizations of the Vermont Network answered 21,447 hotline calls from July of 2020 to June of 2021 - a 15% increase compared to the previous year.
- 7,430 survivors received in-person assistance from an advocate last year.
- Despite a statewide drop in healthcare utilization, 408 survivors received a forensic exam for assault in 2021 – a 77% increase over the previous year.

### **House Approved FY 23 Budget**

- In a year of unprecedented fiscal resources for the State, the proposed House budget will result in cuts to core victim services.
- Currently, the House version of the budget allocates \$2 million to address the projected \$3.2 million funding need for the Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services.
- The \$3.2 million funding request does not include investments or expansion of victim services. This is the amount of funding needed to maintain the current level of services. Without adequate funding, core victim services will be cut on July 1.

### **Fiscal Climate**

- The funding request of the Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services is the result of a structural funding issue – including declining revenues in special funds which use fees and fines to fund victim services.
- Several special funds have been operating in multi-year deficits. Each year that the funds are not made whole, the total deficits grow.
- While some federal funds have been available to victim services through federal pandemic relief packages, this funding is not available to support core services – and came with funding requirements related to specific pandemic response work.
- Largely, victim services have been level funded by state funds since at least 2008. This is in a climate of increasing demand and organizational costs.

### **Solutions**

- Fully fund the Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services \$3.2 million budget request in order to prevent funding cuts on July 1.
- Consider budget language that ensures that when special fund revenues do not meet funding obligations, deficits will be backfilled with general funds.
- Continue long-term discussions about **alternative forms of dedicated revenues** for victim services.